

VZCZCXRO6883  
OO RUEHCI  
DE RUEHKT #1117/01 1571041  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 061041Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6187  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 5814  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 6123  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1353  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 4148  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5423  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1558  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3558  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2744  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001117

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: KATAWAL CONFIRMS NEPAL ARMY'S COMMITMENT TO  
DEMOCRACY

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

-----  
11. (C) Chief of Army Staff General Rookmangud Katawal(COAS) told visiting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry Lowenkron and Ambassador Moriarty June 1 that the Nepal Army (NA) was uncomfortable with the prospect of working under a "leftist" regime. Katawal explained that the Maoists were attempting to destroy the Government from within. The COAS provided assurances that the NA would not interfere in the Constituent Assembly election. Katawal also stated that the NA would cooperate with all human rights investigations. He stressed that he wanted the NA to be respected. Katawal also shared his concern about "rumors" of potential downsizing of the NA and the integration of Maoist troops.

Maoists Must Choose: Ballots or Bullets

-----  
12. (C) On June 1, Chief of Army Staff General Rookmangud Katawal told Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry Lowenkron that, in the last couple of months, he had hoped to see some improvement in the country's political situation, but instead had seen the situation deteriorate. The COAS stated that, in spite of the Nepal Army's (NA) restraint, there was still trouble from "one sector," the Maoists. The Army, he said, was very uncomfortable with the prospect of working under a "leftist" regime. The Nepali people wanted freedom and, if they had been unhappy under the "King's dictatorship," they would be even more unhappy under a Maoist dictatorship. Communism, he opined, would be much more repressive than the monarchy had ever been. He added that it was very difficult to fight or remove communists once they were in power. The Maoists, he instructed, were following the same path as many other communist movements in history. Their goal had not changed and, since they could not take power by force, they were now attempting to destroy the system from within. In response, Lowenkron, told the COAS that the U.S. was very concerned about Maoist intentions. The Maoists, Lowenkron stressed, could not carry ballots in one hand and bullets in the other. Given the Maoist threat, it was critical for the other

parties to be united.

#### Katawal Reaffirms Commitment to Democracy

-----

¶3. (C) Katawal reaffirmed the Army's commitment to a democratic process, and stated that the NA would not trample on democracy. The NA knew that a military dictatorship would not work in Nepal. The COAS explained that in Nepal there was no alternative to democracy; the geography would not allow it. Katawal stated that he had told Prime Minister Koirala repeatedly that the NA would not interfere in the Constituent Assembly election, because the people needed to choose their own government - - free from fear and intimidation. The COAS emphasized that Maoists currently sitting in the Parliament had not been elected and did not have a mandate from the people to declare a republic. He stressed that "mob" power should not be allowed to rule, and emphasized the need to rein in the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL), which he referred to as the "Young Criminals League."

#### U.S. Assistance and Human Rights

-----

¶4. (C) Katawal thanked the Assistant Secretary and the Ambassador for U.S. support and stressed the NA's need for continued assistance. The General also asked that the U.S. deliver the same message to the Government of India. Lowenkron confirmed U.S. support, but stated that U.S. assistance was also connected to the NA's respect for human rights. The Assistant Secretary told Katawal that there were several cases, involving the murder of a young woman (Maina Sunawar) and the disappearance of 49 people (the 2003 case at

KATHMANDU 00001117 002 OF 003

Bhairav Nath Battalion in Kathmandu), where the cooperation of the NA was needed to find a satisfactory conclusion. Katawal responded that he was ready to cooperate in any way and had no objection to the cases being re-opened. The General stated that he wanted the NA to come clean and that the NA would prove its sincerity through action. He admitted that these types of cases should have never happened in a professional army, stressing they had resulted from mistakes, not policy decisions. The General added that the NA should have acted before the human rights organizations attacked." Katawal explained that he wanted the NA to be admired and respected. Katawal also added that human rights organizations needed to hold everyone to the same standard. The fact that the Maoists had not been asked to account for their abuses during the 11-year insurgency had caused resentment. Although Katawal agreed to cooperate, he also stated that he would not "humiliate the NA."

#### Rumors of Downsizing and Integration

-----

¶5. (C) Katawal shared that, in recent conversations with his "political masters," he heard "rumors" about integration and downsizing of the NA. The COAS explained that he frequently talked with the Prime Minister and, with the Prime Minister's permission, other political leaders. Katawal said he had been strongly advising the politicians not to touch the NA for at least five years. He explained that if the current situation continued unchanged, elections in November would not be possible. He suggested that the Interim Government would need at least one year to hold elections and then the new Constituent Assembly would need two-to-three years to draft and pass the constitution. He suspected that it would then be another year before general elections could be held. Until there was a democratically-elected government and a new constitution, he stated that the NA should not be touched. On the reintegration of Maoist insurgents, Katawal suggested that they could be sent abroad to work in Dubai, Malaysia etc., rather than integrated into the NA in large numbers.

NA Needs Arms and Ammunition

16. (C) The COAS repeated his prior suggestion that the U.S. could provide members of the NA who are heading out on peacekeeping missions with M-16s. Then, when they returned to Nepal, they could bring the guns back with them. Katawal stressed that the NA did not have sufficient weapons to preempt an attack by the YCL. In spite of assurances that the U.S. would try to provide support quickly in the event of an attempted Maoist coup, the COAS emphasized, the YCL would not give him any time to re-stock and the NA needed weapons and ammunition on hand. Katawal also said that he had recently received permission from Prime Minister Koirala (also Defense Minister) to fill 7,000 vacant positions in the NA.

Comment

17. (C) The Nepal Army is in a tough spot. Katawal believes that the Maoists are gunning for total power and that their goal has not changed. If this is true, and post thinks it is, then the NA and the Maoists could eventually face a showdown. When and how the two sides meet will depend on the ability of the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) to control their Maoist coalition partners and conduct a free and fair Constituent Assembly election while keeping the NA intact. Given the SPA's record of accommodating the Maoists, it is easy to understand Katawal's concerns. The COAS is right to complain that it is wrong to demand accountability from the NA for human rights violations while letting the Maoists get off scot-free. But the NA's credibility is at stake. Katawal's fine words to the Assistant Secretary aside, if he truly wants to safeguard the NA's reputation, he will have to cooperate more than he has to date in bringing the investigation of notorious past cases, such Maina Sunawar's, to a just conclusion.

KATHMANDU 00001117 003 OF 003

18. (U) Assistant Secretary Lowenkron has cleared this message.  
MORIARTY